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Veterinary Medicine Explorer Post Sponsored by the College of Veterinary Medicine

by D.M. Betts, DVM†

In the mid-1960s the Boy Scouts of America initiated a new approach in their programming. Until that time the Explorer Scout program was outdoor-oriented and aimed at 14 to 18 year old boys pursuing a more advanced experience than the younger Boy Scouts. Exploring became coeducational in the new concept and units were encouraged to develop as career-oriented or special interests Posts.

Veterinary Medicine has been a popular specialty for Explorers since the inception of the program. Although the professions have been the most popular, Explorer Posts have been organized around interests in aviation, law enforcement, auto mechanics, banking and finance, retailing and many others.

The college of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University first sponsored a veterinary interest Explorer Post in 1975 after a student survey at the local high school revealed the interest. Dr. Don DeYoung and Dr. Carla Graham are past advisors; Dr. Dan Betts is currently in that role. Our objective is to provide an in-depth look at a career from a variety of perspectives as well as establish some fellowship among students and adults with similar aspirations. These kinds of Explorer Posts are available in other communities but the University and its faculty and staff have an opportunity to expose these young people directly to some unique things

such as veterinary students, their activities, classwork and their views of the profession; admissions; and preveterinary training. The program has continued with the support and guidance of Drs. Wayne Hagemoser, John Greve, and Dean Phillip Pearson.

Although many career-interest Explorer Posts participate in activities of the local Scout Council, the unit at Iowa state has limited itself to an overview of the profession. The Explorers meet twice monthly and plan what programs they would like. Most often faculty members are recruited to present them or a nearby veterinarian is invited to come and describe his/her kind of practice. Popular programs have centered on the variety of tasks a practitioner might do, such as, radiology, a study of heartworms and other parasitisms and doing heartworm and fecal checks, listening to heart sounds and observing ECGs, observing the effects of a variety of anesthetic drugs, physical examinations and soundness examinations, observing a necropsy and miscellaneous surgical procedures.

The program emphasis this year has been on careers other than clinical practice. We have looked at laboratory animal medicine, basic science research, epidemiology and public health. Dr. Roger Hogle devoted one evening to discussing admissions requirements and procedures and two senior students related their experiences in veterinary school and shared their views of the future of the profession in another program. The Explorers attended a SCAVMA meeting and made a

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trip to Des Moines to see the Emergency Clinic and another small animal hospital.

This year the veterinarians around Ames were solicited and those who responded were named on a list so that Post members could arrange to visit or ride with them. This kind of relationship has been extremely beneficial to the Explorers and has generated considerable positive public relations for our local veterinarians.

Although 12-15 persons register each fall, only 5-10 of them remain active for a year or longer. This year six have shown consistent interest. For some it is quickly evident that the profession is clearly less attractive when viewed closely. Others become attracted to other fields after seeing programs that compare and contrast veterinary medicine to animal science, zoology, human medicine and other health professions.

To date we are not aware of any students that have participated in the Explorer Post that have progressed to admission to the College of Veterinary Medicine. But as one Explorer said, "It's just that—exploring. If I

never go on to veterinary medicine, I still have had a good experience and I am satisfied that I have looked closely at the career and will know better why I do or do not want to pursue it."



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